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## Give the Best Book; The Right Children's Book

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## NEWS TIPS

**NOTE TO EDITORS:** Books are favorite gifts to give and to receive during the holidays. The following University of Dayton experts offer their opinions on the best books to consider this year. Contact information for each source is included.

**GIVE THE BEST BOOK** — For this final Christmas of the 1900s, give the best book you can to a loved one, meaning one that had a great influence on your own development when you were about the same age as the recipient, says James P. Farrelly, English professor at the University of Dayton. In his case, *Huckleberry Finn* started his love of reading and *Lord of the Flies* was a college revelation. *Dune* was his science fiction starting point. "The best book you can give will be one that had a personal, profound effect on you," he said. "It's symbolic, to give a gift of your own heritage, to give a treasure from your own life. You're giving words that influenced your life, and you can share the stories in the discussions that follow."

Some suggestions? Farrelly's list of the finest 10 novels of the century, in order, is *Lord of the Flies*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *The Sound and the Fury*, *Heart of Darkness*, 1984, *The Catcher in the Rye*, *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*, *Catch-22*, *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Dune*.

For media interviews, contact **Jim Farrelly** at (937) 229-3435 or via e-mail at farrelly@checkov.hm.udayton.edu.

**THE RIGHT CHILDREN'S BOOK** — One of the best ways to find the right book for your grandson or niece this season is to ask a local librarian which books are checked out most frequently, according to a University of Dayton assistant professor of teacher education.

Kathryn Kinnucan-Welsch, who teaches children's literature courses in UD's School of Education and Allied Professions, said another sure bet is to stick with the Newbery or Caldecott award winners. When possible, make an advance shopping trip with the children, she said. "Let the children browse the children's section. Observe what books they pick up and tend to hold their interest. After the children have browsed for a while, ask them what books interested them and why. That will give the shopper some ideas."

Kinnucan-Welsch said the recent interest in J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter books is well-warranted. "I think the interest is so high in the Harry Potter books because children love well-written books that tell a great story. I read Harry Potter at the same time as my UD students, and I couldn't put it down. It had fascinating characters and wonderful elements of fantasy. It is appropriate for middle grades and obviously adults too, given the number of weeks it has been on the *New York Times* best-seller list." Her UD students then discussed the series with a local class of sixth graders in a Web-based exchange as part of the course.

For media interviews, call **Kathryn Kinnucan-Welsch** at (937) 229-3578 or e-mail kinnucan@keiko.udayton.edu.

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**ESSAYS OF LOVE, FAMILY LIFE** — Seldom explored are themes and worlds of women over 40 — especially those laced with humor. Barbara Kingsolver's *High Tide in Tucson* is such a book, making it a wonderful holiday gift for anyone "curious about the insights that mature women share," says Monalisa Mullins, a lecturer in the philosophy department at UD.

This recent collection of essays is a witty look into family life, motherhood and newfound love after 40, Mullins explains. In one essay, the author "shares with us her memories of white vinyl go-go boots, Bobbie Brooks sweaters and her bittersweet recollection that she never had those things. She is obviously none the worse for having been deprived of those adolescent must-haves for Christmas, as she readily acknowledges with her delightful essay about her own daughter's lack of fashion sense."

Kingsolver has "never failed to make me smile, while sharing lost memories of my own adolescence and struggles with family and motherhood," Mullins says. "A sensitive and accomplished writer, she can turn a phrase so skillfully that you want to linger there for eons before moving to the next paragraph."

For media interviews, call **Monalisa Mullins** at (937) 229-2752 or via e-mail at [mullins@checkov.hm.udayton.edu](mailto:mullins@checkov.hm.udayton.edu).

**AFRICAN ENCYCLOPEDIA** — No family library should be considered complete without the recently published *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African-American Experience*, by K.A. Appiah and Henry Louis Gates, says Paul Benson, an associate professor of philosophy at the University of Dayton.

"This is a completion of W.E.B. DuBois' project to construct an Africana encyclopedia," Benson says. "I think it would make a wonderful holiday gift because it's a remarkable reference source."

Benson also recommends Andre DuBus' *Dancing After Hours* and *Selected Stories* for their "compelling, emotionally gripping and uplifting" messages; Toni Morrison's *Paradise*, which he describes as a "complex, disturbing and ultimately hopeful novel"; and Michael Ignatieff's *Isaiah Berlin: A Life* — "a very good biography of one of the most influential political theorists of the 20th century."

For media interviews, call **Paul Benson** at (937) 229-2821 or via e-mail at [benson@checkov.udayton.edu](mailto:benson@checkov.udayton.edu).